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ABSTRACT

This book proposes an "engagement" theory of program quality to evaluate and improve higher education programs at all degree levels. Based on interviews with 781 participants in a national study of Masters degree programs, it focuses on the interactive roles of students, faculty, and administrators in developing high-quality programs that emphasize student learning and development. The theory proposes five clusters of program attributes: (1) diverse and engaged participants--faculty, students, and leaders; (2) a participatory culture, which is defined as requiring a shared view of program direction, a community of learners, and a risk-taking environment; (3) interactive teaching and learning, encompassing critical dialogue, integrative learning, mentoring, cooperative peer learning, and out-of-class activities; (4) connected program requirements, which includes breadth and depth of course work, a professional residency requirement such as university research and teaching assistantships, and a culminating program activity; and (5) adequate resources that provide support for students, for faculty, and of the basic institutional infrastructure. An extensive template that can be used to assess program quality is included in a chapter on developing and sustaining high-quality programs. A final chapter discusses the proposed engagement theory in relation to the literature. A technical appendix covers research methods and procedures. (Contains 275 references.) (CH)

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